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United States Mission to the OSCE

Closing Statement

As prepared for delivery by Secretary of Housing and Urban Development
Alphonso Jackson
to the OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight Against Racism,
Xenophobia and Discrimination, Brussels
September 14, 2004

Mr. Chairman, Ambassadors, and Delegates:

I want to thank the OSCE, the Chairmanship-in-Office and our Belgian hosts for organizing this conference on Tolerance and the Fight Against Racism, Xenophobia, and Discrimination.

Yesterday, Prince Hassan observed that democracy is not possible without freedom. In the United States, the values of freedom and equality are enshrined in our Constitution and form the core of our identity as a nation. We recognize that acts of racism, xenophobia, and discrimination threaten stability and security – and, therefore, freedom -- wherever they occur. In order to overcome the constraints of racism, we must free our minds from fear of those who are different from us.

The U.S. has sometimes been slow to appreciate the value of diversity and to realize equality of all peoples. The selling of black Americans into slavery was a dark and despicable act that to this day cannot be reconciled with the nation's embrace of freedom. The tragic mistreatment of Native Americans stands as another blemish in our history books. But we overcame!

Unfortunately, these incidents are not confined only to the distant past. As a black American, I grew up in a segregated environment in which whites and blacks drank from different fountains... attended different schools... ate their meals in different restaurants... lived in different neighborhoods.

As a 17-year-old college student, I had the honor of working alongside a truly great man, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as he led the struggle for racial equality for African Americans. The times were violent, and in 1965 I was part of a group of peaceful marchers who were attacked by law enforcement authorities on an Alabama bridge. They beat us and set their dogs upon us. It would not be the last time I would see bloodshed in the pursuit of civil rights.

To young people, those events seem as if they belong to a different era, even though they happened less than 40 years ago. This is a testament to the progress we have made in the battle against racism and discrimination in the United States. The battle has not been easy, nor is it finished.

That is why we gathered here this week to share our experiences and learn all that we can from one another... to discuss the successes we have achieved in our respective countries... and to recommit ourselves to resolving the challenges that remain. We know there is much

work ahead of us, but as nations committed to promoting tolerance and diversity, we must focus the combined and concerted efforts of government, civil society, and individuals in the pursuit of positive change.

With this in mind, the U.S. delegation has developed a list of key recommendations that will be attached to my written statement.

In 1965, my fellow marchers and I eventually crossed that bridge in Alabama. At the conclusion of our march, Dr. King addressed us. The words he spoke that day continue to motivate all those who work for tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding. He said, “We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. That will be a day not of the white man, not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man.”

Delegates, I wish you great success in realizing the vision of Dr. King as we work together to rid the world of racism, xenophobia and discrimination. I also urge you strongly to work within the OSCE to enable this great organization to do its job, through action, to achieve Dr. King’s goal. This conference is a means toward the goal of the effective institutionalization of the work in OSCE – it is not an end in itself!

**U.S. Delegation Recommendations
To the OSCE and its Participating States
For Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination**

1. Leaders of participating States should speak out and take resolute action against attacks and crimes directed at individuals based on race, color, religion, political or other opinion, sex, language, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
2. All OSCE participating States should seek to eliminate racial and ethnic profiling as a basis for routine law enforcement actions. As a preliminary step, participating States should carry out comprehensive studies of whether their law enforcement agencies are using racial and ethnic profiling. OSCE should develop best practices for law enforcement to serve as alternatives to racial and ethnic profiling.
3. Participating States should vigorously and transparently enforce existing legislation against bias-motivated crimes and incitement to violence. States should also investigate and prosecute all crimes, regardless of the victim.
4. Participating States without anti-discrimination laws should enact such legislation at the earliest opportunity. Those States with anti-discrimination laws should make strengthening such legislation a top priority. All states may consult ODIHR on best practices.
5. Participating States should reach out to minority communities and establish procedures for the reporting of possible bias-motivated crimes and violations of anti-

discrimination laws. Authorities should ensure the rapid and effective investigation and prosecution of such crimes.

6. Participating States, OSCE Institutions, and NGOs should cooperate in developing training programs for law enforcement and justice officials on legislation relating to hate crimes and its enforcement.
7. Participating States should consider developing comprehensive strategies involving civic education programs and increased outreach for integration, not assimilation, of minority communities.
8. Participating States should encourage discussion and possible joint action among NGOs and community-based organizations on local issues that cut across community lines in order to reduce tension between groups.
9. Participating States should affirmatively declare that institutionalized discrimination against religious communities is unacceptable and ensure that their legal systems foster equality, not subordination, of religious groups. Registration laws, policies, and procedures should be non-discriminatory, neutral and transparent and should not use overly burdensome numerical or temporal thresholds.
10. Participating States should fully respect the freedoms of expression and religion in both private and public life.
11. The OSCE should consider meetings on the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination towards Muslims.
12. ODIHR activities related to tolerance, which are mandated by multiple Ministerial and Permanent Council Decisions, should be an integral part of OSCE's work and be generally funded from the core budget and performed by personnel on the permanent staff table. Participating States should provide ODIHR with appropriate resources to carry out those activities.
13. Participating States should take steps against discrimination, intolerance and xenophobia against migrants and migrant workers. States should also take appropriate steps to reduce barriers to equal participation by legal immigrants in economic and civic life.